1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

the worse for their experience. Indeed, it may well be, as Nuer assert, that they are the better for it, for they lead a sluggish life. The blood is boiled by women till it is fairly consistent and can be used as a meat flavouring with porridge; or the men let it stand till it coagulates into a solid block, and, after roasting it in the embers of a fire, cut it up and eat it.

Nuer do not regard the blood of cows as a staple article of diet and it does not play an important part in their cuisine. Indeed, they say that they do not perform the operation to acquire food, though they confess that roasted blood is delicious, but for the benefit of the cows. Bleeding is designed to cure a cow of any unfitness by letting out the bad blood of the sickness. Also, Nuer say, it makes the cow fat, for next day it will be more lively and graze avidly. Bleeding, moreover, in their opinion, decreases the desire of a cow to be served. Nuer say that if a cow is served too frequently it may eventually become barren, whereas, if it is bled now and again, it will only require to be served once and will be in calf. Cattle are sometimes bled for medical reasons in the rainy season, when people may be so replete that the blood is given to the boys of the kraal and to the dogs. Sometimes they make incisions in the noses of calves and let the blood flow to the ground in order to make them fat. I have seen Nuer scarify their own legs and the small of their backs to induce fleetness and strength.

The following two points seem to us to be significant. (1) Whilst Nuer normally do not kill their stock for food, the end of every beast is, in fact, the pot, so that they obtain sufficient meat to satisfy their craving and have no pressing need to hunt wild animals, an activity in which they engage little. (2) Except when epidemics are rife the usual occasions of eating meat are ritual and it is the festal character of rites which gives them much of their significance in the life of the people.

V

Apart from milk, meat, and blood, cattle furnish Nuer with numerous household necessities, and when we consider how few are their possessions we can appreciate the importance of cattle as raw material. The bodies and bodily products of cattle have the following uses:

Their skins are used for beds, trays, for carrying fuel (Plate XVII), cord for tethering and other purposes, flails (Fig. 15), leather collars for oxen (Fig. 4), and for the tympana of drums. They are employed in the manufacture of pipes, spears, shields,

[p. 29 contains no textual material]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

commencement of the rains, in April and May, when the rivers begin to rise again and bring the fish into the shallows where they are easily speared among the reeds and weeds. There is very little fishing—by spear in occasional lagoons—after the Nuer have returned to their villages, for these are mainly inland, away from open water, and the streams are too deep and too infested with crocodiles to encourage fishing. Also, the fish are widely distributed by flood water and protected by rank marsh vegetation. Those Nuer whose villages are on the banks of large rivers sometimes fish from dug-out canoes (Plate IX) with long harpoons, but the Nuer possess very few good canoes —and these they have exchanged or stolen from the Anuak—for they have neither the wood nor the skill to make more than crudely burnt-out vessels of palm and sycamore.

Nuer are fine spearsmen but, otherwise, not very ingenious fishermen. Except for occasional fish spitted with amazing rapidity from the bows of canoes by harpoons and spears as they jump or rise to the surface, Nuer never see their prey, but either hurl their spears at random into likely spots amid weeds and reeds or set up grasses and withies to indicate the presence of fish. A myth recounts that once upon a time all fish were visible to the human eye but that God later made them invisible in the water. The chief Nuer weapon is the barbed spear, though the harpoon is considerably used. When fishing in shallows with spears they sometimes strike the water with a ball of twine or the shell of a giant snail attached to a stick (Fig. 10) to attract the fish. Fish are eaten roasted or boiled.

VI

Nuerland is also very rich in game, though Nuer do not exploit this source of food extensively. There are vast herds of tiang and cob; other antelopes are plentiful; and buffalo, elephant, and hippopotami abound. Nuer eat all animals except carnivora, monkeys, some of the smaller rodents, and zebra, and they kill the last for its skin and tail in the south of Lou country, where it roams in the dry season. Lions abound, especially to the west of the Nile, and are a serious menace to the herds, but Nuer only kill them and leopards, the skins of which are worn by chiefs, if they attack cattle in kraals or grazing grounds, as

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

frequently happens, especially in the early dry season. They seldom go out to hunt game animals, except gazelle and giraffe, and only pursue those that approach their camps. Indeed, they cannot be considered keen hunters and may even be said to treat the sport with a measure of condescension, holding that only absence of cattle makes a man engage in it other than casually. Their flocks and herds provide them with meat, and this fact probably accounts in part for their lack of interest in hunting, which is, however, also to be related to the nature of their country, for its open plains offer little opportunity for successful hunting with the spear.

Nuer refuse all reptiles, except the crocodile and the turtle. Ostriches, bustards, francolin and guinea-fowl, geese, duck, teal, and other waterfowl, abound, but Nuer consider it shameful for adults to eat them and, except in very severe famines it is probable that only children, poor cattleless men, and an occasional elderly person, eat them, and then rarely and secretly in the bush. They do not keep domesticated fowls and show particular repugnance to the idea of eating them. Likewise eggs are not eaten. No insects are eaten, but the honey of wild bees is collected after the firing of the grasses in December and January and is either eaten in the bush or with porridge at home.

The only tribe who possess more than an odd gun or two are the Eastern Gaajak, who obtain them from Ethiopia. Nuer hunt with dogs and the spear, and rely on their fleetness, endurance, and courage. Hunting in the rains is therefore impossible, because not only does rank vegetation impede pursuit but also animals can choose their ground, there being everywhere sufficient water and grazing. At the height of the dry season they are forced to drink at the same pools, lagoons, and river inlets as men, and the dry bare country allows open chase, for except in tracking giraffe, Nuer hunt by sight and not by spoor. It is only gazelles, which are worried by dogs, and buffaloes, which prefer attack to flight, that can be tackled by one or two men. Other animals, such as tiang, cob, and buck, are only killed when they approach a camp and can be cut off by a large number of young men. I saw several animals killed on the Sobat by being surrounded on the landward side and driven into

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

224 the reeds, where their only escape was by swimming the river. In this district, and perhaps elsewhere, Nuer, spurred by hunger, leave camp after the first heavy showers to look for giraffe tracks and pursue these animals relentlessly till they overtake them. This is only possible at the time of the first rains when the animals still have to approach camps to drink while their large hooves stick in the moist earth and slow down their movements. The Nuer, particularly those of the Zeraf river, have a reputation for their courage and skill in hunting elephants, which are surrounded and speared by large parties.

Nuer hunting has thus the same character of simplicity as their fishing. They use little cunning and, except for the spiked-
[[71]] wheel trap, no mechanical devices. This trap is used by immigrant Dinka in most parts of Nuerland and by some of the Lou Nuer, who, nevertheless, regard it as a Dinka contrivance and accordingly tend to despise it, regarding its use as unworthy of men possessing cattle but allowable to poor persons who can
[[31]] thereby obtain meat and even cattle, for giraffe-hair is highly valued for necklaces, such as those which can be seen on Nuer in many plates (especially Plates I and XXVIII(*b*)). Hence one finds a few members of a camp setting traps while the rest abstain. They are set around drinking-pools at the end of the dry season or in the early rains when surface water is still restricted and the ground is not yet moist enough to rot the leather nooses. In 1930 on the Sobat large numbers of giraffe were captured by means of spiked-wheel traps, but it appears to have been an exceptional year. If game-pits are dug at all by Nuer they are very rare and found only on the borders of Dinka tribes, and the burning of stretches of grass that have survived the annual firing in order to spear or club the animals that flee the flames is a very casual practice. In the dry season in Western Nuerland, and probably in other parts, though not on the Sobat, men harpoon hippopotami along the tracks to their nightly grazing grounds. Hippopotamus hunting is not, however, considered a Nuer practice, but a habit of Shilluk and some of the Dinka tribes; and even in those parts where Nuer hunt them it is said to be only men with a few cattle who do so. We may conclude that hunting does not give Nuer much meat and that they do not greatly esteem it as a sport.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

XIII.

Although there is more food in the rains the young men prefer the dry season for they can then spend all day in close association with their comrades and there is plenty of opportunity and leisure for dancing, flirting and displaying themselves before girls from other villages. In the dry season also people can sleep outdoors in the open air with their cattle, for there are few mosquitos. The dry season is also the time for fishing in pools, rivers, and lagoons, and this occupation gives amusement as well as providing tasty and nourishing food. Tiop told me "When the north wind blows at the end of the rains the young men rejoice because the windy season has come. Now they can sleep outside and there are no mosquitos. Now the whole land is burnt and a man can see over the countryside in every direction. Now a man can go out fishing by himself and may be he will not return to camp at night but will sleep on the river-bank. Now they drive the cattle to distant pastures. Only the old men prefer the rains because their bellies are then filled with millet and maize and beer: but the young men rejoice when the north wind blows."

A Western Nuer said "The dry season is good, for then you kill hippopotami and animals of the open plains, and there is the *dompiny* dance and flirting with the girls and jumping and singing behind your oxen. The wet season is good also for then there is plenty of millet, food and beer. Both seasons are good."

As camp life is not everywhere exactly the same it is easier for me to describe the life of members of a section of the Lou tribe who collected at Yakwac on the Sobat River in 1931, as they do every year, and to make comments which will denote certain differences between the mode of life I observed during a lengthy residence there and modes of life observed at dry season camps in other parts of Nuerland.

Camp life is monotonous and drives an anthropologist to despair as nothing unusual happens. Nuer are not eager to fight at this time of the year and marriage, mortuary, and initiation ceremonies are normally held during, or at the end of, the rains, when millet and beer are plentiful. I have spent weeks in camps watching the same daily round. A description of one day serves for any day.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

233 512 [533] they may have to defend them against carnivorous beasts and human raiders. Often they relieve the monotony and solitude by composing and chanting songs. Nuer say that most songs are invented in the grazing grounds. Herdsmen have a quick meal before leaving camp [764] and, except when there are plenty of *heglig* fruits in the early part of the dry season, they will not have another bite till after sunset. However hungry he might feel no herdsman would milk a cow.

512 462 234 237 After the cattle have left camp the day is closed for the men, as far as routine cattle tasks are concerned, till they are brought back to the kraal in the evening; but women and boys continue their labours. Women milk the goats and sheep and prepare the morning meal. Boys spread out the cattle dung that has collected overnight so that it may dry in the sun and furnish fuel to replenish the household fires at night. They also smooth the part of the kraal occupied by their beasts by rubbing over the earth the nightly residue of ashes, urine, and dung. Boys assist in milking the goats and in taking the small calves to shade. They then take the larger calves and the [233] flocks to pasture. Older boys herd the calves and younger boys look after the flocks in the vicinity of the kraal. They spend most of the day playing games. If a small boy is hungry he catches a she-goat and milks it, holding it by the horns with one hand while he pats its [857] udder and squeezes its teats with the other hand from which he then licks the milk. Or he may suckle it. People do not object to small boys milking the goats they are herding. They are small and hungry and need all the food they can get to grow into strong men.

512 462 224 Not all the adult men have been idle while their womenfolk and the boys have been cleaning the kraal and milking. On most mornings parties of two and three leave camp at dawn with their dogs to pick up a gazelle or other small animal. They do not return to camp till after milking is finished, and those who set out at dawn to inspect their giraffe traps return about the same time. After the cattle have been loosened the men potter about for a couple of hours. Generally some of them are engaged in making utensils and ornaments or in dressing their hair.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Much attention is devoted to hair-dressing in the dry season. In the rains the hair is sometimes neglected though never for a long time unless a man is in mourning. Nuer hair is naturally crinkly and black but when treated with ashes of cattle dung mixed with wood ash it is oxidised and becomes straight and golden. A man takes a heap of ash from his wind-screen fire, mixes it with wood ash, and places them on his sleeping skin where he removes any lumps, leaving only fine ash. To make the ashes finer still he beats them with a mallet and shakes and taps the skin so that the ashes are spread over it and can be searched for foreign matter which is then extracted. When he is satisfied he divides the ashes into two heaps, one of which he mixes with water. The Eastern Nuer do not use urine for this purpose as the Dinka and, to a lesser extent, the Western Nuer do. The scalp is now massaged with the damp ashes. When this is finished the hair is gathered into a peak at the back or front of the head and the dry ashes are sprinkled on top. The head remains for two or three days in its ash plaster which is then removed and the hair is sprinkled with oil. Nuer hair freshly treated in this way has a golden tint and glistens in the sun. Young men spend many hours in their wind-screens, after the cattle have gone to pasture, preparing their hair in this way. 362

By about 10 o'clock most of the men are sleeping behind their windscreens, beneath trees, or, if the camp is near a wet season village, in byres. Only if game is sighted is there any male activity in the camp for an hour or two before noontide. The men grasp their spears and with their dogs sprint after the animal to encircle it and run it down. After the first rains all able-bodied men leave camp to search for giraffe-tracks and if they find the animals they pursue them till they are exhausted and overtaken and speared. Nuer sometimes chase giraffe all day long and their endurance will scarcely be believed till it is seen, being especially remarkable when we recollect that they are weakened by hunger at this time of the year. But at the height of the dry season it is useless to hunt giraffe as they are too fleet on hard ground. While the men are sleeping the women are engaged in churning last night's milk. 512 462 224. [234]

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

vary much from month to month for there are few seasonal changes at this time of the year. As the river falls it is possible to fish in lagoons and shallows and to bathe on its sandy bed. Then the lagoons dry up. When the river rises fish swim in the weeds and rushes and along some streams they are easily speared from the banks. The banks of the Sobat are too steep for this purpose. There are no longer shallows and bathing is a hasty dip for there is danger from crocodiles. The grazing grounds are changed from time to time as they become exhausted and as streams and lagoons dry up. At Yakwac there was succulent pasturage only where marsh plants still retained their moisture at the river end of lagoons. The people are still in camp when the first rains fall at the end of April or early in May and then there is everywhere an abundance of pasturage. The brown bush becomes green and the baked fissured earth a sodden mire. Dry lagoons become inland flowing streams. The scorching sun is clouded.

On the Sobat we guessed that the first rains had fallen inland by the migration of wild animals from its banks. Giraffe now left us for inland pastures where they would not have to face death every time they approached the river. Other animals likewise moved southwards, even the gazelle. On the northern bank, however, buffaloes still came to the river to drink and were attacked by hungry Nuer. Animals and men must obey the seasons and when there is no water except in inland lakes and lagoons, men, cattle, and wild beasts must drink at the same places. One can hear them at night cautiously coming to the pools to drink. When the rains come all leave for new pastures.

In May one knows that the move back to the wet season villages will shortly take place not only by cloudy skies and movements of game, but also by camp activities. The women are the first to leave camp and one meets them along paths, carrying their household goods in rectangular cane baskets. Youths leave camp early in the morning to cut stakes, generally of thornwood (*bwau*) and they spend a large part of the day shaping them into tethering pegs. They also twist new cord. The weather being cooler people do not feel so keenly the need to sleep towards noon. Everyone is becoming restless and

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

farther afield may be abandoned for the time being. Other people whose opportunities for fishing may not be so great as their neighbours' may utilize the less accessible pools unmolested, but should climatic conditions cause scarcity elsewhere their owners will demand the right to use them to the exclusion of other people.

Hunting rights are also defined by the limits of recognized tribal or segment territory, but since the Nuer are not very active hunters there is no clear definition, and quarrels rarely arise. There are rules governing the division of the flesh of wild animals killed in collective hunting, though they are rarely followed without argument. The division of meat in these circumstances often leads to violent quarrels but is not a subject which reaches the stage of litigation in the courts. Ivory, a very valuable commodity in Nuer eyes, not because of its market value but because it is the ambition of most Nuer to own an ivory bracelet, is subject to more definite rules. The right tusk must always go to the first spearer, the *ran me koic e-je*, the left tusk to the second spearer, the *ran me gam e-je*. Others who take part in the hunt, even if the wounds they have inflicted have been much more deadly than those of the first two spearers, get no more than their share of the meat. Those who get the tusks must divide them among their kinsmen according to principles similar to those which govern the distribution of bridewealth cattle. The central portion must be given to the *gwan buthni* of the lineage, this portion being sufficient to make one large bangle; of the remainder a portion must go *kwi gwan*, to the father's side, and a portion *kwi man* (or *nar*), to the mother's or maternal uncle's side. Dead elephants are sometimes found, the ivory going to the first and second finder in the same manner. The right to tusks and the way in which they are distributed are not matters which come before the courts, and there are strong ritual sanctions for observing the correct rules. There is a mystical link between man—that is, Nuer—and elephants, which means that killing them is not only a hazardous physical undertaking, but is also spiritually dangerous. It is something akin to homicide, and special ritual must be performed, including the letting of blood (*birr*) from the first spearer.[1] Nuer also believe that if they ignored the rules of distribution, the spirit (*cien*) of the dead elephant would haunt them and would bring them misfortunes.

Conclusion

Rights in land are therefore collective and follow the segmentary structure of Nuer society. They are recognized and nowadays will be enforced in the courts, and they embrace all types of land necessary to the subsistence economy of the Nuer, but they are not in constant

[1] As in homicide it is the first spearer who is held responsible for the animal's death.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Chapter Two

RESOURCES OF THE NUER

WILD ANIMALS AND CATTLE

WILD animals abound in Nuerland. Lions, leopards, giraffes, buffaloes, elephants, hippos, monkeys are found as well as other species, and also crocodiles, snakes, and scorpions.

Sometimes animals are killed with spears (Fig. 4), sometimes traps are made to catch them. Holes are dug into which they fall and are unable to get out. Men sometimes chase them and drive them toward the trap which they have made. Giraffes may be killed in this way as they cannot run fast, especially if the ground be muddy. Monkeys are safe in Nuerland as a Nuer will not willingly kill them. If a monkey is killed, it will surely rain hard, but if it is killed in the dry season, the weather will only become cloudy.

Probably the largest snake found here is the python. Many of the snakes are deadly poisonous. One is a spitting snake. Another is said to bite and also sting its victim with its tail at the same time, much as a scorpion stings. Another snake, the 'thatut', is said to leave a tooth in the person it bites. The Nuer believe that if a person is once bitten by a 'thatut' no other snake will deign to bite him.

The number of cattle owned by individuals varies in different parts of Nuerland. Those who live along the Nile have many cattle. Those in the Garjak country have more cattle than those near Nasser. In the regions where cattle are more plentiful the number of cattle asked as a marriage price is greater.

Cattle with the wide-spreading long horns are the most desirable. A Nuer is afraid that a cow without horns may

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

the other, and twins are two *pwony* but a single *ran* (p. 128). However, the idea of the soul, as we have noted, seems to be attached chiefly to the concept of *ran*, to belong to the representation of a developed social being. An animal has, or is, a *pwony*, but it is not a *ran*, except in a purely figurative sense.

Nuer do not attribute souls to creatures other than man except perhaps cattle and elephants. They speak of the *tie* of a man at his mortuary ceremony going together with the *tie* of the sacrificed beast away from the living to wherever the ghosts may be, and since in sacrifice, especially in piacular sacrifice, there is an identification, discussed in a later chapter, between man and ox, it is understandable that, at any rate in sacrificial contexts, Nuer should speak of the souls of cattle. But though Nuer imply in relation to sacrifice that cattle have souls, they have no clearly formulated belief to that effect, and I am not sure that they would agree to the proposition if it were put to them as a question unrelated to sacrificial intention. Nevertheless, it may be supposed that since Nuer sometimes speak of an ox's *tie* they think that cattle have in some degree intelligence and will and a personality that survives death, however vague it may be.[1] Moreover, they speak of the ghosts as herding cattle in wherever it is they have their abode. That Nuer reflect on this question, and also that they are undecided about the answer to it, is shown by the fact that Dr. Smith, so she tells me, has often been asked by Nuer whether she thinks cattle have souls.

Though I have never heard Nuer speak of an elephant's *tie*, that it is thought to have one is implicit in the belief that if the rules about the division of the tusks of a slain elephant are not observed the dead beast may *gwor*, track down, those responsible (Dr. Lienhardt tells me that in Dinka the word means 'to take revenge'). *Gwor* has here, therefore, the same sense as *cien*, haunt. Also, Dr. Howell states that the man who first speared a slain elephant, and is therefore by a convention regarded as responsible for its death, has to have his right arm incised by a leopard-skin priest before he can eat or drink just as if he had slain a man, and a beast is sacrificed in the one case as in the other. He says

[1] That a cow in a kind of way can be thought of as a person is suggested by other facts. A rite is performed to separate twin cows, which are hence, unlike other beasts, regarded till then as being one, as human twins are. A rite is also performed, to prevent the calf sickening, when the first milk of its dam is taken for human consumption. See also Chap. X.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

further that when the tusks are removed they are first buried under the floor of a cattle byre before being cut up for distribution among such persons as have rights in them, and that when they are buried a sacrifice, called *kirpiny*, is made, the name of the sacrifice being the same as that made when a man is buried.[1]

The only occasions on which I have heard Nuer speak of creatures, other than cattle, or things having a *tie* was when they were discussing offerings of food and tobacco to fetishes, and in this case the usage was clearly metaphorical just as was their use of the word *cam*, to eat, in the same connexion. *Cam* is often used in a metaphorical sense to indicate that something is being appropriated, as when it is said of a man, usually a man with the evil eye or someone connected with the Government, that '*came nath*', 'he eats the people', that is, he takes something from, or exploits, the people. Nuer know very well that a fetish does not really eat the offerings. They only suppose that it in some way appropriates them, and since the offerings are obviously not materially appropriated they are more or less obliged to use the only available analogy and to speak of the fetish taking their 'souls'. Nuer do not attribute souls to food and tobacco, or to any other things. They are merely using the word in an attempt to explain their use in a very special and peculiar situation.

I have discussed this question partly because it was necessary to do so to make clear that in Nuer thought the soul is something essentially human which man has in addition to life, which he shares with other creatures, and partly because it is of some theoretical importance. In the light of the discussion it will be [121] seen that the so-called animistic theory of religion, chiefly associated with the name of Tylor, cannot be sustained for the Nuer; since they are not animists and there is no evidence that they ever have been. But there is a further and more decisive reason for rejecting it. It supposes that the conception of Spirit derives and has developed from that of the soul, whereas in Nuer thought *kwoth*, Spirit, is something of quite a different nature from *tie*, soul. The soul is part of man and a created thing. Spirit is extrinsic to man, operating on him from outside him, and invasive. Nuer express the difference in nature between the human and the divine, between soul, or ghost, and Spirit when they say that 'God

[1] P. P. Howell, 'A Note on Elephants and Elephant Hunting among the Nuer', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1945, p. 100.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

seeing that an injustice has been done. The man had no right to take the life of the ox and by doing so he committed a fault. In sacrificial invocations Nuer explain to God why the life of the ox is being taken, and they may also address the ox and tell it why it is being killed—not that they think it understands. They are justifying themselves in taking its life.

Consequently I was not surprised to learn from Dr. Mary Smith, whom I asked to inquire into the question, that when cattle are killed in time of famine Nuer, though they do not consecrate the beasts, may make an invocation over them asking God that 'the meat may be soft in their stomachs and not bring them sickness'. This does not constitute sacrifice, there being no sacrificial intention, but it shows that there is a feeling of guilt about killing animals for food even when hunger compels it, and we can say that all cattle, and also sheep and goats, are reserved, or set apart, for sacrifice and their lives should not be taken, except in the special circumstances I have mentioned, for any other purpose. In that sense we may speak of cattle as being 'sacred'. If we do so, however, we must note that they are not sacrificed because they are regarded as sacred intrinsically, or for reasons extraneous to the sacrificial situation, but, on the contrary, they are regarded as sacred only because they are reserved for sacrifice and in the sense defined by that purpose. I have discussed beasts of the herd only and not those of the flock because, as we have noted earlier, in sacrifices they are 'cattle', surrogates for oxen. It is pre-eminently their role to play the victim's part in sacrifice and they are consequently also reserved for sacrifice, but the sacrificial equivalence is always between *ran* and *yang*, man and 'cow', never between man and sheep or goat, for even when it is a sheep or goat which is being killed the ideal equivalence is preserved in speech.

In order that the sacrificial killing of beasts of the flocks and herds may be seen in a wider setting both of the taking of lives of creatures and of the eating of flesh, it should be realized that, except for fish, Nuer seldom kill wild creatures but rely almost entirely on the flesh of their domesticated animals for meat. For religious reasons they are averse to killing birds, except occasionally the ostrich, to which the same symbolism does not attach, for its feathers; and also reptiles, except the turtle and the crocodile (perhaps occasionally the monitor lizard). But even where there is no objection to killing animals, as in the case of mammals, Nuer

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

seldom go out of their way to kill them. They do not go out to hunt lions, leopards, and hyenas, unless they molest the flocks and herds, and usually they only pursue those graminivorous animals which come to drink near their camps and seem to offer themselves for slaughter. It is not that it is thought to be wrong to kill them, but that except in time of famine, Nuer are little interested in hunting. They speak of it as a Shilluk and Dinka practice beneath the serious attention of a Nuer who can boast of a herd—as a pursuit, that is, of foreigners or of men without cattle. Even those who deliberately set out to hunt elephants and giraffe do so less to obtain meat than to acquire ivory and hair which can be exchanged for cattle, sheep, and goats. This lack of interest in hunting may be due to the fact that their flocks and herds supply them, through sacrifice, with meat and to the nature of their country which renders hunting difficult, but, whatever the reason, they are not interested, so that any killing of animals outside sacrifice is rare; and we may here say again, as has been said before in a rather different context, that the Nuer mind is turned inwards towards his own society of men and cattle. He is not unobservant of nature but he sees it with a contemplative and not with a predatory eye that seeks to destroy and exploit. He sees wild creatures as something in their own right, and his disposition is to live and let live. His folk-stories reflect this attitude and the feeling that killing, like death, is something which has come about almost by accident and is not in the original nature of things.

A large part of Nuer folk-lore consists of stories about animals.[1] There are stories about ogres; a cycle of adventure stories about how cunning fox tricked hyena; many just-so stories which tell why hyenas limp, why plovers have thin legs, why guinea-fowl crouch, why millepedes are blind, why cows have no upper incisors, and so forth; and stories of yet other sorts. God sometimes figures in these stories as a judge in a way which appeals to the Nuer sense of humour as well as to our own. For example, fish, finding that they were visible to man in the water and hence easily speared, appealed to God who let them be invisible. God sometimes figures

[1] I have not published the folk-stories I collected among the Nuer. Some of those given by Miss Huffman (*Nuer Customs and Folk-Lore*, 1931, pp. 88–104) show Anuak influence. Those recorded by Capt. V. H. Fergusson ('Nuer Beast Tales', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1924) have Nuer themes but may be Atwot, or even Mandari, versions of them, for *rill*, the jackal, and *ijong*, the hawk, are two main figures in them, and these are not Nuer words.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

CHAPTER XII

PRIESTS AND PROPHETS

I

It has been noted that women do not make sacrifice and that though any man can make it only senior men who are fathers of families, 'bulls' as the Nuer call them, do so. Personal sacrifices are usually, as in most cases of sickness, performed by the head of the family or some senior kinsman and neighbour, but sacrifices which have more than domestic import and are thought of as involving a whole lineage or clan—collective sacrifices—have to be performed by a person called *gwan buthni*, whom I have spoken of as the master of ceremonies.

The verb *buth* means 'to share', and since collateral lineages of a clan and also clans with common ancestry may claim portions of the flesh of sacrificial victims at each other's collective sacrifices, there is said to be *buth* between them. They are to one another *jibuthni*, people who share. The word is also used when speaking of the adoption of a captured Dinka into his captor's lineage. He is said to be *lath buthni*, given shares. A sacrifice is made and in the invocation at it the guardian spirit of the lineage is asked to receive the Dinka into its care and the ghosts of the ancestors are informed of what is being done. The Dinka is smeared with the victim's chyme. He now counts as a member of his captor's lineage and has a right to partake of the meats of its sacrifices and also to claim a portion of the meat at sacrifices by any other lineage to which this lineage stands in a *buth* relationship. *Buth* has consequently the further meaning of agnation. *Jibuthni* are agnates. *Lath buthni* is to be given agnation. Agnates are people who share in the flesh of sacrifices.

Buth relationship is stated also in terms of the division of elephant tusks or of cattle exchanged for them. When hunters kill an elephant the right tusk goes to the *koc*, the man who first speared it, and the left tusk to the *gam*, the man who speared it next. The tusks are cut into portions to be used as armlets—one of the most precious of Nuer possessions—or are exchanged for

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

613 cattle, and the portions of ivory or the cattle are divided among
614 those relatives of the spearsmen who receive cattle of bridewealth
and bloodwealth and the flesh of sacrifices. Those standing in a
224 *buth* relationship to the spearsmen also have rights in the tusks.
This means in practice that a section of the tusk, or its equivalent
in cattle, goes to the particular *thok mac*, minimal lineage, of the
spearsman's clan to which the *gwan buthni*, master of ceremonies,
of his family belongs, and it is this man who gets it.[1]

782 Each family has its master of ceremonies, who is a member of
a lineage collateral to that of its head and therefore one of his
613 distant agnatic kinsmen. A son takes his father's place in this
593 service. The same man may act on behalf of the heads of several
families of the same minimal lineage, and one of his close agnatic
kin may act in his stead, since he carries out his functions not as
an individual but as representative of a group. The office is not
necessarily reciprocal, for a man may act as master of ceremonies
to a family of one collateral lineage and have as master of cere-
monies to his own family a man of a different collateral lineage.
Also, a family may have more than one master of ceremonies, the
second belonging to a different collateral lineage from the first.
Moreover, it would seem that if one of the persons who usually
acts in this capacity is not available his place may be taken by any
distant kinsman who can be held to represent him. Nuer are very
latitudinarian in such matters; but the point we have to note is
that on certain occasions a whole clan or large lineage offers up the
sacrifice, and the officiant ought then to be someone outside the
family and close kin most immediately concerned who represents
the interest of the wider group, which participates in the sacrifice
through him.

782 A master of ceremonies functions at weddings, mortuary and
colwic ceremonies, settlements of blood-feuds, adoptions, initia-
613 tions, severings of kinship to allow intermarriage or cohabitation,
the building of new byres, and the division of elephant tusks. On
these occasions he calls out the clan or lineage spear-name and
then makes an invocation, usually prior to animal sacrifice. By
calling out the spear-name he identifies the whole clan or lineage
with the offering. When the victim has been killed he cuts through
the scrotum (*juak tem*), this being the commencement of the skin-

[1] See also P. P. Howell, 'A Note on Elephants and Elephant Hunting among the Nuer', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1945.